The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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THE WILD ROSE.

Fair are the flowers the tardy spring,
At last fulfilling all our hope,
With largess late is wont to fling
Along our northern slope.

For us the cowslip sheds its gold;
For us the May-flower breathes perfume;
And in our meadows, low and cold,
White violets bloom.

But some resplendent morn of June,
When sunbeams thrill with fervid power
And sea-waves chant a murmurous rune,
Come, see our perfect flower.

From sunset skies of molten red
Her deeply glowing hues were wrought;
From pearly shell in ocean's bed
Her paler tints were caught.

Her tender greenery gently fills
With graceful, softened shape
The outline of the rugged hills
All round our Cape.

She flashes in the deepest wood,
We trace her by the brooklet's edge,
But most where billows harsh and rude
Beat on the cruel ledge.

Her dauntless smile we love to greet;
Life's central radiance through her flows;
Her fragrance makes the east wind sweet,—
Our beautiful wild rose.

—*Eliza Scudder.*

PARABLE OF THE FISHERMEN.

The other day I stood in the grounds of Harvard College, watching that always most inspiring sight, the stream of fresh, vigorous youth as it poured to and fro among the great buildings. I noticed, as a man always does when revisiting his college, that the boys had never looked to me so young; and yet I knew that in that college life, which from the outside looks so merry and so hopeful, the serious problems of life were already beginning for many of those fine, boyish-looking men. High ambitions were there, and keen anxieties and deep restlessness, many struggles and sacrifices, and withal a ceaseless movement of spiritual life, of battles against sin and victories for truth and good, just as elsewhere in any mixed throng of human beings. And I knew how many a one of those young men, looking back some time upon the critical, eventful college days, will wish that they had been otherwise, wish he could live them through again, to make them of more profit and nobleness to himself and to the world.

I remembered then that this feeling of the college graduate is only the feeling of every man in looking back upon a lost youth. Every man, every woman, of any sensitiveness of nature, must come to the end of youth, with all its preparations and experiments, feeling that much is done and little won, and that in those early years, even with all the passion and strife of them, one has stayed much in the shallower waters of life. The launch into the deep is yet to be. At such a time, in such a mood, one realizes the solemn law of life, that nothing can ever be lived over. The experiments of

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youth can never be repeated. Its failure or its promise never returns. Its lessons may remain, but they must be applied to different conditions. The happy memories of youth and its bitter regrets, these also remain, but only as the waters of the brook remain in the greater stream of the river, becoming a part of a larger life and deeper experience, and so utterly changed. Therefore, whether for one's self or another, the mood of disappointment and regret for a seemingly fruitless past should bring with it the conviction that the remedy and hope lies not in trying to "live the past over," but in the wider and better experiences of the future. Nearly all the failures, mistakes, and sins of early life arise from limitation and blindness, or from the loss of self-control, rather than from deliberate choice of evil. As one launches into life's deeper sea, not only do inexperience and curiosity cease to be causes of temptation, but also an entirely new range of sentiments and purposes are brought into play. When we say to the wayward boy, "It is time now you should begin to be a man," what is it but an appeal to the larger life, the deeper sympathies, the wider ambitions of manhood, as his surest hope and safeguard?

What is true here, in passing from one season of life to another, that the only hope and safety is simply in going on, is true for many other experiences.

Nor is the change from the shallow to the deeper waters of life to be had merely in change of place or circumstance. Wherever you are, whatever mode of life you follow, you may be living superficially or you may be, as the apostle says, "searching the deep things of God," living by great and satisfying thoughts of God and his world, and so sustained by the abundant and overflowing powers of the spirit, which come with all deeper faith and larger love.

Here, again, the abiding problem of all free and noble living is how to keep the daily life, with all its weariness of detail, its littleness and insufficiency, in perpetual connection with your greatest and most precious thought of God, your largest and most enthusiastic ideal of human nature, and your highest, dearest hopes for God's kingdom among men.

The question is not whether your life is spent in little things and little duties, but whether their littleness is the means and instrument through which you live a large and abundant life. The depth and largeness of life does not lie in externals, but in the receptive attitude of heart and mind.

For instance, most of you spend your lives here in this great city. You are ever in sound of the midmost roar of the great ocean of humanity. You have had books, travel, opportunities, pleasures. But who does not know that in the very midst of these wonderful forces, these large, exciting movements of life, a man or a woman may live a thoughtless, narrow, selfish life? A little woman from a small village will sometimes come among us taking notes, and then we find out that from her quiet point of observation she has been living a larger life than most of ours, more in sympathy with universal humanity, and in her provincial surroundings really nearer to God and to man than many a metropolitan worldling. She knows what our great city means better than we do ourselves.

One might multiply indefinitely illustrations of such contrast between external poverty and inward wealth.

Always the mark of the superficial and external life is the sense of emptiness it brings. The shallow waters make no return, however busily the fisherman watch and toil. If there is in your heart any such consciousness, be sure it is because you have not sounded the richer, deeper opportunities that are somewhere waiting for you, when you will let down your nets that way.

Some time, if not now, there will come a great awakening knowledge, which, like that morning in Galilee, will show you where the real rewarding interests of your life are found. This is what we mean by the "experience of religion." It may come to you as a mighty sorrow or peril, which will show what are your most precious treasures and what powers you are living by, so that ever after you will see the true proportions of your life,— what things are eternal and life-giving, and what are only for the shallow waters and the trivial hour. With this revelation may come the sense that loss, peril, or pain, has made your life take a wider course, and brought you into richer privileges of love and power than ever you had known.

But they are especially happy to whom

as to these fishers in Galilee, the new spiritual enlargements come, not at first by stress and storm, but with a deeper realization of the sacredness and meaning of their common daily duties. The constant method of Jesus was to impress men with this sense. He found in every honest man's work some symbol of heavenly grace, some parable of the soul's opportunity. The men in their fishing, shepherding, and farming, and women in their sweeping, baking, and grinding at the mill, were all doing service in a heavenly kingdom, and occupying themselves, did they but know it, with divine laws and powers forever holy. Happy are they who can so interpret the routine and the mechanics of life in this spirit of Christ that all these things are felt as mere incidents in the glorious unfolding life of immortal souls, as humble instruments of righteousness, as lowly channels for the waters of life, and daily opportunity for growing fellowship with God and man.

These deeper waters are ever round us. Every morning comes the call of the spirit to follow after God some better way. Whether it be to go forward into the untried waters of new and unexpected circumstance, or, being where we are, to let the nets down deeper, be sure that such a brave, enlarging life is the supreme evidence of faith, and the only life in which we may save ourselves from the emptiness and disappointment of unrewarded tasks.

Theodore C. Williams.

THE STILL HOUR.

THE REVIVAL.

Unfold! unfold! take in His light
Who makes thy cares more short than night.
The joys which with his day-star rise
He deals to all but drowsy eyes;
And (what the men of this world miss)
Some drops and dews of future bliss.

Hark! how the winds have changed their note,
And with warm whispers call thee out!
The frosts are past, the storms are gone,
And backward life at last comes on.
The lofty groves, in express joys,
Reply unto the turtle's voice;
And here, in dust and dirt, oh, here
The lilies of his love appear.

—*Henry Vaughan*, 1621–1695.

It is the nature of things to move on. Like the passage home of a conquering general laden with spoils, time is a grand, triumphal procession, enriched along its early stages with treasures of learning, literature, art, and religion. The procession does not halt within a stronghold or city walls, but continues on interminably, giving out of its abundance along the route to all, the wealth of learning, literature, art, and religion. The great progress is the Lord's to other domains.—*W. M. Bicknell.*

We need to grow into a diviner thing than the time shows, than the time aspires to, than the time believes in. We need to take the Christ from where he has been laid, and allow him to walk abroad in the atmosphere of daily life, once more appealing pungently and convincingly, and building himself into the soul, its life.—*J. F. W. Ware.*

The days that have gone down forever in the west are so related to the days that are now in the meridian that it is with a sweet sadness we think of much which once met the eye and occupied the mind,—church, school-room, homestead, and other things now passed by, being in gear with the rolling wheels of time. It is with a sweet sadness we remember friends with whom we walked and communed, now caught up to the better land. A sweet gladness is now in many a pleasant experience,—a sweet fondness for the exercise of hope, that "springs eternal in the human breast." So, under a good Providence, there is sweetness all along, relating to what has gone by, what is going by, and to days which are yet to shine.—*W. M. Bicknell.*

THE BIBLE CLASS.

ACTS XII. THE ESCAPE OF PETER FROM PRISON.

The Herod who figures in this chapter is Herod Agrippa I.

After the death of Herod the Great the kingdom was divided into four parts; and each division was governed by one of his sons, with the title of "tetrarch." Herod Agrippa I. (the subject of our narrative) was his grandson, the son of Aristobulus

and of Berenice. He was named Agrippa after the chief minister of Augustus, and had been sent, after the death of his father, to Rome, where he was brought up on friendly terms with the imperial family, his mother being intimate with Antonia, the grandmother of Caligula.

Caligula himself was the friend of Herod. He loaded Herod with honors, conferred on him the forfeited tetrarchates of Antipas, Philip, and Lysanias, and bestowed on him the title of king.

Herod was a politician. He knew enough about the Jews to see that they were great sticklers for their religion.

"When he came to Judea, he presented himself to the people in the character of a devout worshipper" (Ellicott).

He had, however, no real comprehension of the religion of the Jews, as is shown by his accepting divine honors (xii. 21, 23),—a custom of the Roman emperors, but revolting in the last degree to the Jews.

On arriving in Jerusalem, he found a strong popular excitement against the Christians, increased perhaps by the recent admission of the Gentiles to full fellowship. The priests would be especially bitter against them; and Herod naturally supposed that to a religious people like the Jews the priests were everything, and expressed, with few exceptions, the sentiments of the nation.

"He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword."

Had James been tried before the Sanhedrin, and condemned on a charge of heresy or blasphemy, the sentence would have been stoning. Beheading was a Roman method of punishment.

"Because he saw it pleased the Jews,"—that is, the priests,—"he proceeded to seize Peter also."

"He delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers."

That is, sixteen soldiers, who relieved each other at set times. Four took charge of the prisoner, he being chained to two of them, while the other two guarded the exit from the prison. It appears from the story that there were two doors; and one soldier watched the outer door, one the inner. Farrar remarks upon the improbability of any man, a friend of Peter's, succeeding, under these circumstances, in entering the prison and effecting the release of Peter (a favorite explanation of modern critics), especially as the soldiers were responsible with their lives for the safe keeping of the prisoner.

"Intending after Easter ["the passover" in the revised version] to bring him forth to the people." In order that the people might be witnesses of Herod's zeal for the Jewish religion, he intended to make the trial and sentence of Peter as public as possible.

"And when Herod would have brought him forth,"—see revised version,—"when Herod *was about* to bring him forth." Peter had been in prison nearly a week.

"Peter was sleeping between two soldiers." He was chained to the soldiers, even when asleep.

From the form of the story we see that this part comes directly from Peter. "An angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell." This is the way a man suddenly waked from sleep would describe the circumstance.

We now naturally consider the question: Was this "angel" an angel in the sense in which we commonly use the word,—*i.e.*, a celestial visitant, not amenable to the laws of matter? or was it a man, and (as the negative criticism is inclined to believe) a friend of Peter, who, by bribery or other means, had gained access to the cell of the prisoner? There are difficulties in both views.

It is hard for us, at this stage of history, to believe in the intervention of supernatural beings without cogent proof. Besides, the demeanor of the celestial visitor resembles strongly that of an ordinary man. It does not sound natural for an angel to strike Peter a blow on the side, and say to the bewildered prisoner, just roused from sleep: "Get up quickly! Put on your shoes! Put on your cloak!" This *sounds* like a fellow-being of clay.

On the other hand, the objections of Farrar and other broad and fair-minded orthodox commentators seem cogent. It is to the last degree improbable that any man, a friend of Peter, could have made his way into the prison, and walked out with Peter, meeting no opposition from the soldiers, who answered with their lives for the safe-keeping of the prisoner.

Is there a third hypothesis?

Continuing the narrative, we read that the "angel," followed by Peter, passed "the first and the second ward"; *i.e.*, the two soldiers who were guarding the outer and the inner doors of the prison.

Why did these soldiers allow Peter to pass?

There seems but one answer possible to this. The messenger must have had a warrant from Herod, allowing him to enter, and to take Peter away with him. On the supposition that the visitor was a *man*, no other explanation seems possible.

But would Herod have been likely to do this? and why?

We have noticed Herod's peculiar position with regard to the Jews. He had been sent out to govern a nation to whose ideas and ways he was practically a stranger, but whom he wished, from motives of policy, to conciliate. He was like the young Englishmen, sent out to govern provinces in India, in the early part of this century (except perhaps that they had less desire to be adaptive), unfamiliar with the character and ideas of the Jews, and assumed that by gratifying the priests he would please the people of Judea.

It was now nearly a week since Peter had been imprisoned. Had anything happened during that time or had Herod heard anything new, which might cause him to change his mind in regard to Peter?

We do not know of any new developments; but Herod had had time to learn something more about Peter.

What is the last thing that we know of Peter before his imprisonment? The baptism of the household of Cornelius. Now Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army, one of Herod's own soldiers. Herod may also have had opportunities of learning more about the Christians during the week of the ceremonies preceding the passover. He knew that many Romans and other foreigners were strongly attracted toward the Jewish religion, but were treated with exclusive harshness by the Jewish *priests*, and kept upon a low plane,—not admitted to full fellowship. But here was a man, a leader, the chief leader, among this new (Jewish) sect,—for as such were the Christians regarded,—ready to admit Gentiles to full fellowship, and courting popularity among Herod's own soldiers, baptizing them and visiting them freely in their own houses. It would be safer to wait before taking farther measures against the Christians.

This theory is in a measure confirmed by the passage in verse 19: "And he went down from Judea to Cæsarea, and there abode." Herod was in a dilemma between his newly aroused fear of taking a false step, which he might afterward regret, and the difficulty of retreating from the policy to which he had committed himself with the Jewish priests. His only safety was in flight.

L. F. C.

[In preparing this lesson for a Bible class, some years ago, I hit upon the solution here offered. Afterward, while glancing at a volume of Zeller on the Book of Acts, I noticed an allusion to Baur, substantially as follows (I quote from memory): "*Unless* we accept the explanation of Baur: that Herod changed his mind, and sent some one to release Peter." I had not seen the passage in Baur, and have not found it since. So I do not know whether he connects this change in Herod's purpose with the incident of the baptism of Cornelius; but I am gratified to find so distinguished a supporter of the Herod theory.]

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[*Send all matter for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 2 Kensington Park, Roxbury, Mass.*]

OFFERS.

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in Training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty," address Miss Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.?

The Brookline Branch offer the following books. Address Mrs. Frank E. Sweetzer, Warren Street, Brookline, Mass.

"Memoir of Life of Henry Ware, Jr.," by his brother, John Ware; "Memoir and Sermons of Rev. Jason Whitman," 2 vols.; Livermore's "Commentaries," 1 vol.; "Primeval World of Hebrew Tradition"; "Memoirs of Rev. Joseph Buckminster," and of his son, "Rev. Joseph Stephen Buckminster"; "Hymns for Public Worship"; "Miscellanies," by Harriet Martineau; "Last Days of Pompeii"; "Flowers for Parlor and Garden"; "Religious Poetry," Miss Emily Taylor; "Confessions of an Early Martyr"; "Discourses and Essays," Rev. Stephen Farley; "Sermons on Various Subjects," Henry

Coleman; "Life and Letters of Rev. Dr. Temple"; "Book of Daily Praise and Prayer"; "Formation of Character," Henry Ware; "Sermons," Rev. Abiel Abbott; "The Throne of David," Rev. I. H. Ingraham; "Selections from the Life of Fénelon"; "Christian Monitor"; Butler's "Analogy"; Bird's "Elements of Natural Philosophy"; "Silent Pastor, or Consolations for the Sick"; "Book on Flowers"; "Sowing and Reaping," Mary Howitt; also a number of school books, Latin, Greek, and French.

The following books are offered by the Springfield Branch. Address Miss Clara D. Hoar, c. o. Samuel Bowles, Crescent Hill, Springfield, Mass.

"Children of the King," Crawford; "The Ogilvies," "Agatha's Husband," "Hannah," "The Woman's Kingdom," Miss Mulock; "Aunt Serena," author of "One Summer"; "Seven Stories with Basement and Attic," author of "Reveries of a Bachelor"; "History of England" for junior classes; "A Little Pilgrim," Oliphant; "Glimpses of a Better Life"; "There and Back," George MacDonald; "Little Dorrit"; "Self-sacrifice," Mrs. Oliphant; "Poems," author of "Schönberg Cotta Family"; "Sonnets and Lyrics," H. H.; Queen Victoria's "Memoirs of the Prince Consort"; "Sister Augustine" (an Old Catholic), translated from the German; "Summer Driftwood," "The Winter Fire," Rose Porter; "Poems," Charlotte Brontë; "Among the Hills," Whittier; "Heir of Redclyffe," Miss Yonge; "Miss Bagg's Secretary," Clara Louise Burnham; "Dr. John Brown and his Sister Isabella"; "Marse Chan," Thomas Nelson Page; "Voyage of the Liberdade"; "Doings of the Bodley Family in Town and Country."

The Church of the Disciples Sunday-school Branch offers the following books. Address Miss Lena L. Carpenter, Church of the Disciples, Warren Avenue, Boston, Mass.

"The Last Days of Pompeii," Lord Lytton; "David Copperfield"; "The Wide, Wide World"; Bullion's "Latin Reader"; Bullion's and Morris's "Latin Lessons"; "The Miracle at Markham," Sheldon; "Life of Fredrika Bremer," Charlotte Bremer; "A Hardy Norseman," Lyall; "Beppo, the Conscript," Trollope; "Tour of the World in Eighty Days," Jules Verne; "Glen of the Echoes," Harriet Martineau; "Our New Mistress," Yonge; "Rab and his Friends," Brown; "Lessons in Life" and "Words for the Wise," Arthur; "Tale of Two Cities," Dickens; "Treasure Island," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "New Arabian Nights," "Merry Men," Stevenson; "When a Man's Single," "My Lady Nicotine," Barrie; "The Last of the Mohicans," Cooper; "He went for a Soldier," John Strange Winter; "John Halifax," "Miss Tommy," Mulock; "The Alhambra," Irving; "Adam Bede," George Eliot; "Looking Backward," Bellamy; "Dorothy Forster," Besant; "Robert Elsmere"; "Kathie's Soldiers," from the "Kathie Stories"; "Home Sunshine"; "Christie Johnstone," Charles Reade.

Miss Ella M. Hall, Gouverneur, N.Y., offers Allen and Greenough's "Cæsar"; "Beginner's Latin Book," by W. C. Collar, A.M.

Books offered by the Austin Street, Cambridgeport, Branch. Apply to Mrs. V. W. Cupples, 237 Franklin Street, Cambridgeport, Mass.

"English Grammar," Simon Kerl; "Intermediate Reader," Hillard; "Spelling Book"; "Arithmetic," Greenleaf; "Arithmetic," Warren Colburn; "Poems," C. F. Orne; "Third Primary Reader"; "Latin Reader"; "The Man of the Family"; Monroe's "Sixth Reader"; "Letters of L. Maria Child"; "Lamplighter's Story," Charles Dickens; "Bible History"; "Stories from the Lips of the Teacher."

The Eastondale Branch offer the following magazines. Apply to Mrs. Olive J. Gilmore, Easton Centre, Mass.

Youth's Companion, 1897–98; *McClure's Magazine*, 1898–99; "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush"; *Munsey*, 1898–99; *Household*, 1899; *Ladies' Home Journal* (old numbers, perfect files); *Review of Reviews*, 1898–99; "An Earnest Trifler"; one set Isaac Pitman's text-books on Phonography; "How John's Wife made Money at Home"; *Harper's Magazines*, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892; *Old and New* (imperfect files).

REQUESTS.

[*Read directions at beginning of Book Club before writing.*]

Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please

write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.) 6. Do not send matter for the Book Club to Miss Clarke, but to Mrs. Nichols, the Book Club secretary.

Those who write to us for the first time must send the name and address of a minister as a reference. Without that the request will not be printed.

We organized a "Circulating Library Club" in January, and have succeeded in obtaining only a small collection of books. Any contribution of standard literature, history, science, fiction, or good books for children, will be very gratefully received and much appreciated. Also current numbers of magazines, such as the *Century*, *Scribner*, any of *Harper's* publications, etc. Jessie L. Pirie, Parita, Bexar County, Texas.

I am making an endeavor to establish a library for the girls and boys here. Most of their parents are of limited means and any books, miscellaneous, reference, or school, will be appreciated and will do good. J. H. Bryce, Geneva, Florida.

My dear Cheerful Letter Friends,—Several books have come to my hand, all of which I have acknowledged; but now I am trying to get up a library of historical and religious books, such as will best prepare me for my life-work as a missionary. I am grateful to the Book Club for all books sent me. All books sent to me will be thankfully received. Rev. Newton M. Talbot, Trenton, Fannin County, Texas.

Dear Cheerful Letter,—I have come to realize that, if there is any one thing that humanity needs more than anything else, it is cheerfulness.

I live in the far-away West, have no library privileges whatever, have no children of my own at home with me. I love to read anything that is uplifting or instructive. I have a little step-granddaughter with me who likes to read story-books and papers. Will you be so kind as to send us something to read? Mrs. Mattie Hulse, Stella, Oklahoma.

May I call in, and chat a little bit with you all? I enjoy *The Cheerful Letter* so much, it is gladly welcomed into my home. May I ask those that can spare any good reading to please share with myself and children, two sons and one daughter? The children would like *Harper's Young People* or *St. Nicholas* of this year, 1900. I like religious readings. May I ask for some sheet music for an organ for our daughter? She can play very nicely. I have not received any reading from the Cheerful Letter Society for a long time. I felt I was forgotten. I am an invalid. I seldom go away from home. At times I get very lonesome. Then is when I wish for a good book. I receive *The Cheerful Letter* every month. Thank the unknown friend that is so kind as to send it, for it contains so much to cheer a lonely one, like myself. I do hope I will be remembered with some good reading soon. We are so hungry for something new to read, we will gladly accept any. With love and best wishes for this New Year, and may God bless all those that remember his poor! Mrs. Martha W. Guy, Box 5, Germantown, Kentucky.

I have recently come out here to take a situation as governess; and, as I have a great deal of time on my hands and nothing to read, I would like to avail myself of the offers made in the paper.

There are two women besides myself in the house, who would appreciate good reading. We are the only white women for miles, and are entirely surrounded by Mexicans. You can perhaps guess at the loneliness of our lives, and anything to help pass the hours would be most gratefully received. (Miss) Adelaide Baker, Cerro, New Mexico, care of Henry J. Young.

I am wondering if I could get some music. We live in a very isolated place. We have an instrument, but have played and sung "everything out." There is a little boy and girl living near us who have good voices. Lucy Crane is about five years old. Would like some motion songs or very babyish songs. The young people here enjoy music, such as coon songs. I would very much like to get "Listen to my Tale of Woe" for a boy of ten years to sing, and also "We're all alone, dear Joe." Mrs. Lillie Davis, St. Just, Virginia.

I am again a petitioner to you for reading matter. I am now an invalid, having lost my health by climatic fever while with the

army in Cuba and Porto Rico. As you are perhaps aware, I have had charge of the Unitarian Mission here for thirteen years; but I can do no more active work. And I love reading (it is all I can do now), but am so poor I cannot purchase literature; and I must now beg it. So, if you can send me books or periodicals, I shall thank you very much indeed. Dr. J. F. Campbell, Pine Mountain, Tennessee.

"Stepping Heavenward" is asked for by Miss Bettie Wiggins, Robbinsville, Upper Canada.

Through the kindness of one of the cheerful friends, I am permitted to read the very interesting little paper each month. I would be very thankful and gladly pay postage if some of the ladies would kindly send me some sheet music: most any kind would be acceptable. Would especially like to get the words and music to "The Shadow of the Pines" and "Just as the Sun went down." Annie Danskin, Harlan County, Ragan, Nebraska.

Mrs. Alice Adkisson has moved from Hutto, Texas, to Robert Lee, Coke County, Texas, Box 132, and would be glad to receive reading, such as novels, magazines, newspapers, books, or periodicals; also, a First Reader for her little boy, aged four years, who is paralyzed and unable to walk.

Mrs. Laura Vaughn, Centralia, Indian Territory, will be thankful for anything to read, either for herself or her little girl eleven years old, who is fond of reading.

Miss Katie Scarborough has removed to Hannibal, Texas.

Mrs. Sarah Gilbert has changed her address to Mt. Vernon, South Dakota.

I wish to thank one and all of *The Cheerful Letter* people for their kindness to me. I hardly dare think what life would be to me (a book-lover) in this isolated life without books. Then I have been enabled to supply people with reading who would not have come in contact with *The Cheerful Letter*. I also send to those who seem to need it most, who asked, *long ago*. I have received grateful and pathetic letters, and feel well repaid for what little good I am able to do. If I have neglected to thank any one or to reply to a kind letter, please be patient with me, friends; for my strength depends on my health, and that is *very* uncertain. And I have much to do besides. I hope you will send me occasional magazines and good *novels*, as *recent* as possible: any kind will do. The cowboys and others ask me for reading. *They* like the illustrated ones best,— the *Strand*, *National*, *Black Cat*, etc. *I* would like the May, June, July, September, and December of the *Atlantic*, 1898, if some one will be so kind, *Scribner*, *Youth's Companion*, etc. I will pass them on. We are sixty-three miles west of Pierre. Mrs. M. S. Sibley, Manila, Stanley County, South Dakota.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

[*Contributions to this department may be sent to Mrs. J. S. Howe, Chestnut Street, Brookline, Mass.*]

THE QUESTION OF DISCIPLINE.

My dear, "How *tempus* does *fugit!*" as the college boys used to say. To think your last letter has lain unanswered so long, and that baby is almost two years old! And, besides, after my long delay, I shall have to be so ungracious as to give you the bitter tonic of a little scolding. I told you you'd repent asking my advice; for, from the tone of your last letter, I am afraid you're making one of the commonest mistakes of young mothers. You say you get almost discouraged: your little boy has such a naughty temper, and it is hard to make him obey you. You would never have believed that a child so young could be so self-willed and passionate. Will you think me very cruel if I tell you that I'm afraid you're as much to blame as he is, and that the root of the difficulty is too much sewing-machine and too little fresh air? You sit down in your nursery, with the baby playing about on the floor, and take care of him and sew all day long, going out but seldom. Isn't that so? I can hear your answer already. "Yes; but how can I help it? I can't leave him much with the girl. The kitchen floor isn't a fit place for him, and she's too busy to take proper care of him. If I go out, I must take him; and to stop and dress him and myself uses up so much time out of the very best part of the day that I don't seem to accomplish anything with my sewing. Besides, I am making him some of the sweetest little dresses, with

such cunning little tucks, that I can't bear to leave them."

And so you sew on, impatient at every interruption. Your very interest in your work making you "hurry to see how it is going to look," the atmosphere of the nursery growing more and more charged with mental electricity and bad air, till finally the little fellow makes some request more unreasonable than any previous one, but which, if you were in your best estate, you would refuse so pleasantly or substitute something equally good so readily that he would be quite satisfied. Instead you are provoked that he should ask anything more, when you are half-killing yourself (as you think) for him now, and you give him an angry denial. Then comes a storm of angry crying. Your irritated nerves respond with an equally angry (shall I say it? Oh! poor human nature, it's true) shake or even slap. He answers back saucily or refuses to obey you, perhaps even strikes at you with his puny little hand; and then you must punish him. But in what state of mind or body is either of you for that most difficult and delicate task,—a *just* and *fair* punishment? The affair degenerates into an angry quarrel between a strong person and a very weak one. Well for you if, before the thing is over, the little fellow doesn't say once, "Mamma, I didn't mean to be naughty; but you beginned it, mamma!"

With what a sinking heart and reproachful conscience you look back after your passion has cooled off! and very likely, unless you are a good deal wiser than most of us, feeling your injustice, you undo what little good your discipline may have done by injudicious indulgence afterward. And—what has become of your sewing? Now suppose you philosophically say, "I might as well take care of this child out-of-doors as in the house." And so you and he go out for a walk, leaving your nursery windows open meanwhile. How changed everything is, when you return! How much better he behaves! you say; and I doubt not, if he could speak, he would say the same thing of you. But the dress isn't finished that day. No; but, "as the life is more than meat, and the body than rainment," so are red cheeks better than white dresses, and a happy heart than a ruffle.

Then, on long hot summer afternoons, there is a deal of moral suasion in a good bath and fresh clothing, even if he has had his regular "wash" in the morning. I have seen three or four children, behaving like a troop of snarling little savages, transformed, by a course of cold water, hair-brushes, and a few clean clothes, into a company of pleasant, well-behaved, civilized little Christians. If children's clothes are uncomfortable, either too tight or too loose, they will sometimes be cross from that alone. Think of the miseries children endure from tight skirt bindings, loose underwaists that drag down on their shoulders, stockings that won't stay up, and hats that continually slip off!

There will come times, too, when the child makes a direct issue against your authority. Such a moment is a very serious one; and no mother ought to enter upon the conflict without lifting up of the heart to the Source of all wisdom for guidance and discretion.

You must remember that in this matter of government you are aiming to teach your child, not merely to mind you now, but how to govern himself when he grows up; for he will not always have you to teach him. You are to instruct him to have command over his passions and appetites and will and inclinations, just as in learning to walk he learns how to control and use his muscles and sinews. Not to "break his will," not to put him in subjection, but to teach him to control his will by his reason. To do this, he must learn to obey you because it is right he should, because you are set over him as an authority for himself, not because you have whipped him into a fear of you. I will not say that a child brought up on this principle will always spring at your bidding; but I do think he can be trusted to obey as well in your absence as in your sight, and be competent to see the right from the wrong in any ordinary emergency of temptation.

It is very important not to allow your punishment to be cumulative; that is, not to heap one thing on top of another. Because a child has done wrong and been punished, to refuse him his good-night kiss, or something like that, is to a sensitive nature sometimes sheer cruelty. Remember that the child has not forfeited your love. You are not angry with him, but with his offence;

and may combine the strongest indignation against that with the most loving tenderness and yearning over him. The punishment over, and the child repentant, consider the matter settled, and never allow any one, especially a servant, to taunt him with it afterward.—"*Twenty-six Hours a Day*," *by Mary Blake.*

NATURAL HISTORY.

HIDE-AND-GO-SEEK.

I told you how clever the little caddis-worms are in hiding by surrounding themselves with leaves, sticks, or sand, so that you could never suspect the presence of the little larva within unless you should happen to see him put out his head and legs. Land insects also have different ways of hiding. Some bury themselves in the earth. Others live under bark, stones, or leaves. Some beetles that hide under bark have very flat bodies,—a great convenience to them in such a situation. The crab-spiders usually have a flat body; and the front two pairs of legs are longer than the others, and so bent that the spider can use them when in a narrow crack.—*Emerton.*

Many insects and other animals are rendered inconspicuous by being of the same color as their surroundings. If you were trying to hide from your playmates in the house, and had on a brown dress, you would look for a brown curtain or chair behind which to crouch. It is still more important for the little insects to be able to conceal themselves, that they may not be found and eaten by some larger animal seeking for its breakfast. Some are saved from this fate by having a very unpleasant flavor; and these do not need to hide, and, in fact, are often rather gayly colored and make quite a display of themselves.

But the species that birds usually find toothsome morsels are protected in many ways, one of which is to resemble in color the objects among which they live. I quote the following from Mr. Wallace's interesting book called "Tropical Nature": "Protective colors are exceedingly prevalent in nature, comprising those of all the white arctic animals, the sandy-colored desert forms, and the green birds and insects of tropical forests. It also comprises thousands of cases of special resemblance of birds to the surrounding of their nest, and especially of insects to the bark, leaves, flowers, or soil, on or among which they dwell." You will often find very interesting facts described under the titles of "Protective Coloration" or "Protective Mimicry"; and you may yourself discover others which have never been noticed before.

A Mr. Nottidge, of England, observed in a cluster of flowers of the wayfaring tree a spider of a pure creamy white color, the exact tint of the flower, her body resembling precisely the unopened buds, not only in color, but also in size and shape. Nearly every cluster contained one or more of these spiders. They belonged to the hunting spiders, which do not spin webs; and doubtless their resemblance to the flowers, while it prevented their being seen by insectivorous birds, was of service to them, also, in concealing them from the flies that visited the flowers, whom they were thus enabled to capture. Last summer I saw a pale yellow spider sitting on a pale yellow flower, and holding by the nape of the neck a large bee which was quite dead.

I have often seen a pretty pink and white spider on a pink and white sweet-pea blossom, and wondered if he made that his home, and where he went to live when the pink blossoms were succeeded by the green pea-pods. If any of you can answer this question for me, I hope that you will do so.

Cora H. Clarke.

AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[*Please send all material for this department to Miss E. D. Chapman, 34 Buckingham Street, Cambridge, Mass.*]

Geographical Puzzle.

The answer to each of the following questions is a city and the State or county in which the city is situated. No. 6 has also a river as well as two cities.

1. Can you make a joke on the word "China"?
2. How do you tie up a part of Europe?
3. Where are you going to travel in Europe?
4. Where are people the best dressed?
5. Did your son Frank go to the war?
6. When is it dangerous to travel?

Charades.

1.

An old king of England, by violence heated,
Endangered the weal of his soul.
To atone for my *second*, my *first* he repeated
Full nine times a day on my *whole*.

2.

My *first, second, third,*
Many do each night:
The stars do my *whole,*
Flashing down their light.

E. P. P.

Conundrums.

1. When does the cat sleep the best?
2. What is the difference between Joan of Arc and Noah's ark?
3. What is the difference between a schoolmaster and an engineer?
4. Which is the greater poet, Will Shakespeare or Edgar Allan Poe? The answer is the name of a well-known literary man.
5. Why is beefsteak like a locomotive?

Drop Letter Puzzle.

The following is a sentence with the vowels omitted. By supplying the same vowel as many times as is necessary, it will be easily read.

H l n s f t f l t t n d r s h f l l t n f t b n t h r k n v n w r n c h d h r n c k.

Articles found in the parlor.

1. A stamp and a wagon.
2. As far as China.
3. An insect.
4. A vehicle and a darling.
5. Large.
6. A conjunction and a kitchen implement.
7. Important in base-ball.
8. What sometimes comes from the North and an interjection.
9. A form of medicine, and debased.

Answers to puzzles in May number.

Charades.

1. Answer (Ann, Sir.)
2. Foundry.

Conundrums.

1. In F-i-g, in effigy.
2. When it is madder.
3. To reviews.
4. Her coachman.
5. He is always selling what he needs (kneads) himself.

Decapitations.

1. Scold, cold, old. Spill, pill, ill. Amend, mend, end.
2. Glove, love. 3. Brook, rook. 4. Fox, ox.

THE SWISS GOOD-NIGHT.

Among the lofty mountains and elevated valleys of Switzerland the Alpine horn has another use besides that of sounding the far-famed Ranz des Vaches, or cow song; and this is of a very solemn and impressive nature. When the sun has set in the valley and the snowy summits of the mountains gleam with golden light, the herdsman who dwells upon the highest habitable spot takes his horn, and pronounces clearly and loudly through it, as through a speaking trumpet, "Praise the Lord God!" As soon as the sound is heard by the neighboring herdsmen, they issue from their huts, take their Alpine horns, and repeat the same words. This frequently lasts a quarter of an hour, and the call resounds from all the mountains and rocky cliffs around. Silence at last settles over the scene. All the herdsmen kneel and pray with uncovered heads. Meantime it has become quite dark. "Good-night!" at last calls the highest herdsman through his horn. "Good-night!" again resounds from all the mountains, the horns of the herdsmen and the rocky cliffs. The mountaineers then retire to their dwellings and to rest.—*Our Dumb Animals.*

Make thy life better than thy work. Too oft
Our artists spend their skill in rounding soft,
Fair curves upon their statues, while the rough
And ragged edges of the unhewn stuff
In their own nature startle and offend
The eye of critic and the heart of friend.
If the too brief day thou must neglect
Thy labor of thy life, let them detect
Flaws in thy work, while their most searching gaze
Can fall on nothing which they may not praise
In thy well-chiselled character. The man
Should not be shadowed by the artisan.

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox.*

Believe me, the talent of success is nothing more than doing what you can do well. *Longfellow.*

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.

OBJECTS.

1. To cheer and comfort the lonely and discouraged — not only invalids, but all who need cheer and comfort — by the interchange of letters and by gifts of books and periodicals.

2. To supply in some measure to young people in remote places the lack of schools, by gifts of school-books, letters, and, for those who desire it, correspondence classes on history, the natural sciences, and other interesting branches of study. If any desire to join such classes, they may send their names to our secretary.

3. Also to supply, to some extent, the lack of a church. One good sermon or sermon extract is printed in each number of the paper. These sermons are never doctrinal, but practical, and intended to cheer and comfort the sorrowful and aid in giving a vital religion without regard to sect or creed.

4. An important part of our mission is to mothers of young families, who feel the importance of their sacred charge and are anxious to learn all that can be known to make of their children good, upright, useful men and women,— good citizens of the country, for which we must all work together if we would make it fulfil its mission among the nations of the world and to the races of mankind. We give books on subjects connected with the training of children, and our columns are open (in our "Mothers' Council") to all who have questions to ask or interesting suggestions to make on topics important to mothers.

WILL ANY MINISTER WHO RECEIVES THIS PAPER KINDLY NOTICE THAT IT IS NOT SENT TO HIM WITH THE OBJECT OF OBTAINING SUBSCRIPTIONS, BUT THAT, IF HE KNOWS OF LONELY PEOPLE LIVING IN REMOTE PLACES ON RANCHES AND PRAIRIES, — ESPECIALLY WHERE THERE ARE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN,— IT WILL ASSIST THEM AND BE A FAVOR TO US TO SEND THEIR NAMES TO OUR SECRETARY, THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE OUR PAPER FREE AND ENJOY THE ADVANTAGES OF THE OFFERS OF BOOKS, ETC., WHICH ARE PRINTED IN EVERY NUMBER?

We must inspire young lives with the true elements of manhood and womanhood. We, as they, must come to see what life means, what life wants of us, and put ourselves at that with all the power we are masters of, and do that thing as if it were the only thing to be done and we alone could do it: consecrate ourselves to, concentrate ourselves upon it.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

In sending requests or offers of books, it is essential to address these communications to the *Book Club* (secretary, Mrs. W. B. Nichols). If addressed to the Editor, these letters are in some cases postponed, in others altogether omitted. See directions in every number of *The Cheerful Letter*.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our secretary, Miss Langmaid.

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